

Amendment to the claims:

B 1. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for routing a telephone call to a data network, the apparatus comprising:

(a) ^{→ new matter} (a memory for storing a category of telephone numbers representing telephone calls to be placed over a data network in packet switched format; and

(b) processing means for accepting a dialed telephone call directly from a device initiating said call, for determining, ~~prior to said call reaching a telephone switch,~~

whether said call is within said category, and for routing said call through an optimal ^{new matter} originating gateway to said data network if so; and

(c) ^{new matter} selecting means for determining said optimal originating gateways from plural originating gateways each being capable of conveying said call to said data network.

112 2. (Currently Amended) Apparatus of claim 1 connected to a data network, wherein ~~said data network includes plural originating gateways, and wherein~~ said memory stores information concerning which of said plural originating gateways to utilize to access said data network;

3. (Original) Apparatus of claim 2 wherein said each of said originating gateways is capable of communicating over a data network to plural terminating gateways.

4. (Original) Apparatus of claim 1 wherein said category is comprised of all calls outside of an area code in which the call originates.

5. (Original) Apparatus of claims 3 connected via a data network to an operations center, said operations center being capable of altering information stored within said memory and implementing changes to said category of telephone numbers.

6. (Original) Apparatus of claim 4 connected via a telephone network to an operations center, said operations center being capable of altering information stored within said memory and implementing changes to said category of telephone numbers.

31
7. (Currently Amended) A method for routing telephone calls, comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving the call directly from a device initiating the call and examining, ~~prior to said call reaching a telephone switch,~~ a received telephone number associated with said call to ascertain whether a particular property is present;

11/2, 11/4
(b) if so, selecting an optimal one from plural originating gateways each being capable of conveying said call to a data network, and routing the call to an said optimal originating gateway, and if not, routing the call to said telephone switch; and

(c) if said call is routed to said optimal originating gateway, examining the telephone number again to determine to which of a plurality of terminating gateways said call should be routed.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein said originating gateway makes said determination of said terminating gateway in conjunction with other gateways.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of reallocating traffic among plural terminating gateways.

10. (Currently Amended) A method of completing a telephone call, comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving the call directly from a device initiating said call and examining a dialed number associated with a said call prior to said call reaching a telephone switch;

(b) if said number is within a predetermined class of numbers, selecting an optimal one from plural originating gateways each being capable of conveying said telephone call to a data network, and conveying said telephone call to a first remotely located telephone switch over a said data network; and

(c) if said number is not within said predetermined class of numbers, conveying said telephone call to a second remotely located telephone switch over a telephone network.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein said remote telephone switch is reached via either a telephone switch, a first terminating gateway, or a second terminating gateway, and wherein the determination of which of said first or second terminating gateways or said telephone switch is utilized to reach said remote telephone switch is made at least in part by comparing a predetermined subset of digits contained in a called telephone number.

12. (Currently Amended) A network for completing telephone calls, the network comprising a router connected directly to a device initiating said calls, the router being programmed to examine dialed numbers associated with calls ~~prior to said calls reaching a telephone switch,~~ said router further being programmed to separate long distance calls from local calls, ~~and~~ to transmit some of said long distance calls and all of said local calls over a circuit switching network, and the remainder of said long distance calls over a packet switching network, and to select, for each specific long distance call to be transmitted over the packet switching network, an optimal one from plural of originating gateways each being capable of conveying said each specific call to said packet switching network.

13. (Currently Amended) The network of claim 12 ~~further comprising a plurality of originating gateways, at least one of which~~ wherein said selected optimal originating gateway is in communication with said router for converting the specific call from a circuit switched calls to a packet switched calls, and for routing same over a data network.

14. (Original) The network of claim 13 further comprising a terminating gateway to convert telephone calls from a packet switching format on said data network to a circuit switching format, and to place said calls in circuit switching format on said telephone network.

15. (Original) The network of claim 14 wherein each of said terminating gateways incurs a charge as a result of terminating said calls, and wherein changes in such charges are utilized to update routing information stored in said router.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

✓ 19. (Currently Amended) A method for routing a telephone call over a data network comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving a dialed number associated with the call and examining said dialed number ~~prior to said call reaching a telephone switch~~ by a router directly connected to a device initiating the call;

(b) parking the dialed number at the router;

(c) selecting an optimal one from plural originating gateways each being capable of conveying said call to a data network, and transmitting the dialed number from the router to an said selected optimal originating gateway;

(d) parking the dialed number at the originating gateway;

(e) finding an optimum terminating gateway to accept said call over said data network;

(f) sending the dialed number from the first gateway to a second gateway over said data network; and

(g) connecting the call to a terminal identified by the dialed number.

20. (Original) The method for routing a telephone call as described in claim 19, further comprising the steps of acquiring the caller's number and determining if the caller is authorized.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the step of determining if the caller is authorized, comprises:

(a) transmitting the calling number from the router to a computer;

(b) accessing a database associated with the computer; and

(c) comparing a calling number to information stored in the database.

22. (Original) The method for routing a telephone call as described in claim 20, further comprising the step of sending an authorization to the router if the caller is authorized.

23. (Original) The method for routing a telephone call as described in claim 20, further comprising the step of terminating the call if the caller is not authorized.

24. (Original) The method for routing a telephone call as described in claim 19, further comprising the step of locating an optimum terminating gateway.

25. (Currently Amended) A method for routing a telephone call, comprising the steps of:

- 31
- (a) receiving a dialed number associated with the call and examining said dialed number ~~prior to said call reaching a telephone switch~~ by a router directly connected to a device initiating the call;
 - (b) parking the dialed number at the router;
 - (c) determining if the caller is authorized;
 - (d) if the caller is authorized, selecting an optimal one from plural first gateways each being capable of conveying said telephone call to a data network, sending the dialed number from the router to a first gateway;
 - (e) parking the dialed number by the first gateway;
 - (f) sending the dialed number from the first gateway to a second gateway; and
 - (g) connecting the call to a terminal identified by the dialed number.

- 26. (Original) The method for routing a telephone call as described in claim 25, further comprising the steps of acquiring the calling number by the router and transmitting the calling number from the router to a computer.
- 27. (Original) The method for routing a telephone call as described in claim 25, further comprising the step of selecting a terminating gateway.
- 28. (Original) The method for routing a telephone call as described in claim 25, further comprising the step of sending an authorization to the router if the caller is authorized.
- 29. (Original) The method for routing a telephone call as described in claim 25, further comprising the step of terminating the call if the caller is not authorized.
- 30. (Currently Cancelled)
- 31. (Currently Cancelled)

32. (Currently Cancelled)

33. (Currently Cancelled)

34. (Currently Cancelled)

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36. (Currently Cancelled)

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1